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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: THE COLOMBIAN PATIENT

Classified By: Daniel Lawton, Acting Political Counselor,  
for Reasons 1.4(d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On March 11, news services were reporting rumors that FARC directorate member Milton Jesus Toncel was being treated at a medical clinic in the town of Rubio in the Venezuelan border state of Tachira for a wound to the face. Guardia Nacional Operations Chief Juan Carlos Hidalgo later announced that the injured man was not Jesus Toncel. Communications Minister Andres Izarra said the BRV was seeking the support of Interpol and Colombia's Department of Administrative Security to identify the patient and his companion. At 5:30 on March 11, local media reported that the Colombian patient was moved under heavy military escort to a helicopter which flew him to the military hospital in the city of San Cristobal. END SUMMARY.

#### CASH PAYMENT

¶2. (SBU) Venezuelan news services were abuzz on March 11 when it was rumored that FARC directorate member Milton Jesus Toncel, AKA Joaquin Gomez AKA Usuriaga, was seeking medical treatment for a gunshot wound to the face at a clinic in the town of Rubio in the Venezuelan Border State of Tachira. Two men, speaking with Colombian accents and presenting false Venezuelan identities reportedly offered large sums of cash so the wounded person could be treated for a gunshot to the face on March 8. According to press reports, soldiers from the local Guardia Nacional (GN) unit quickly encircled the building and maintained tight security thereafter.

#### WHO ARE YOU?

¶3. (SBU) On the afternoon of March 11, GN Operations Chief Juan Carlos Hidalgo announced that the injured man was not Jesus Toncel. State broadcaster VTV compared video of the Colombian patient alongside a photograph of Jesus Toncel to indicate they were not the same person. VTV also reported that the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DIM) and the Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services (DISIP) would be working to determine the identity of the injured man and his companion. Hidalgo added that the patient first called himself "Jesus Castro" and later his companion referred to him as Freddy Martinez. BRV Communications Minister Andres Izarra announced that the BRV was seeking the support of Interpol and Colombia's Department of Administrative Security to identify both men. Army Chief of Strategic Operations Jesus Gonzalez Gonzalez asserted that the heavy security was required because if the two men were part of a para-military or guerrilla group, their enemies "might come back to finish them off, endangering the clinic staff".

¶4. (SBU) At 5:30 PM on March 11, press reported that a heavy military escort moved the Colombian patient via helicopter to the military hospital in Tachira state's

capital, San Cristobal. The patient was described as conscious but wearing a respirator. Sources told a reporter that the victim had received a bullet in the face, removing the upper lip and two thirds of the tongue. It is likely an old wound since maggots were reportedly found in the oral cavity. The report added that attending physician Ciro Omana was not allowed to leave the clinic, and a sign on the wall announced that the doctor's appointments "had been suspended."

15. (C) COMMENT: These men were most likely FARC members, given the high degree of security and the BRV-sponsored MEDEVAC to San Cristobal. Notwithstanding initial press speculation, nothing has surfaced to confirm that the wounded Colombian is not a FARC directorate member.

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